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Christian Teachers navigating a 'Hindu Nationalist' Education system

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seminar for Hyderabad Advance Research on
Religion and Culture, a Federated Faculty of
ACTC (Andhra Christian Theological College),
Henry Martin Institute and Calvin Institute
Theology 9th Aug 2019



Fig 1 map of states of India http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/india_map.html Andhra Pradesh is now divided –Telangana +AP



Research question-

How do a sample of teachers and headteachers narrate the impact of their own faith and their school's Christian foundation

Project funded by St Christopher's Trust and University of Cumbria

- Listening to their stories using IPA approach and identifying themes which arose - 'making sense of them making sense of their views', within the context of post-colonial India's education system (Smith and Osborne 2003)

Themes

- 1.interconnectedness of values,
2.the Christian religion,
3.the context of the Indian education system,
the post colonial context – caste/ Hindu
nationalism/ Christian schools
4. espoused values,
5. a teacher's faith - impact on practice.
6. How the 'institutional body language' of the
school (Dadzie 2000), is enacted in practice.

Research design and sampling

- IPA interpretive phenomenological analysis

Smith and Osborn 2003

- Interpretivist paradigm (Denscombe 2014)
- Narrative approach (Clandinin 2007,)
- Time and accessibility factors determined who was included in my sample –Convenience, snowballing and opportunistic sampling in Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Jorhat and Aizwal providing a range of views from university, college, secondary, primary and nursery professionals

Main Themes

Interpretative phenomenological analysis – exploration of how participants narrate their personal and school ‘life world’ (Smith and Osborn 2003)

- Influence of Christian values in their schools (given that the majority of learners are from Hindu, Muslim or Sikh backgrounds)
- Impact of the teacher’s faith on teaching and learning
- Affinities between Christian foundation, an individual teacher’s faith and the Christian ethos as exemplified in the school’s ‘institutional body language’ (Dadzie 2000) -for example the displays, taught and hidden curriculum, relationships with the staff, equality of opportunity etc.
- Post colonial educational context (Iliahi 2012; Varma 2004; Young 2003; Ramachandran 2016)

Three themes emerged which are mapped on to West-Burnham and Davis tree metaphor (2014):

1. Christian values provide deep ethical roots.
 2. Biblical texts and Christian doctrine informs decision making – the tree trunk , and the day to day action – the branches
 3. Differences and commonalities
- The presentation highlights the tension of conflicting values - Indian Christian teachers sharing God's love whilst adhering to governmental policy not to coerce non Christians to convert.

Findings

Theme from India data	Tree metaphor
1. God sustains and personal faith empowers both in personal and professional life	ROOTS : Christian values and ethics underpin decision making
2. Biblical texts guide behaviour teachers are inspired by Biblical values : obedience, love, honesty, humility etc ,	TRUNK : Biblical texts and Christian doctrine informs decision making BRANCHES/leaves : the day to day behaviour inspired by decision making
3. One faith, myriad interpretations teachers' 'voices' illustrate elements in common but also significant differences,	DIFFERENT TREES: teachers' narratives are all Christian (tree not a flower) but different (eg Bayan tree, Indian Mahogany, Curry tree, Mango tree etc)

Biblical text in SEN school B



- Bible guides action
- Institutional body language (Dadzie 2000)

Display in 10 year olds classroom Christian foundation school Bangalore. Christian teacher



Chhota Beem (children's cartoon hero) Unity in Diversity

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cUlnX8iw8Sc>



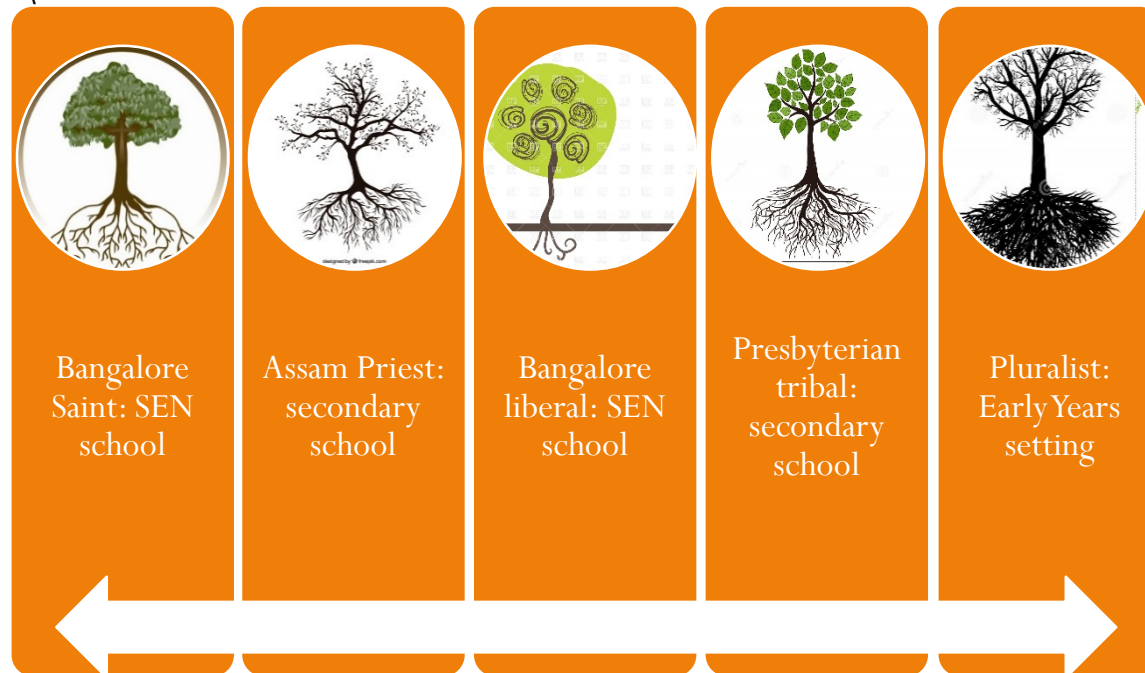




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Same religion, Christianity (tree not a flower) ; Different interpretations of Christianity (eg Assam Catholic priest, Presbyterian tribal, : Different trees (Indian Mahogany, Bayan tree, Mango tree



Tree images available at

<https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=tree+branches+roots+images+free+download&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiCv6y339PSAhUCC5AKHXQtDRMQ7AklUg&biw=1518&bih=748>

accessed on 13.3.17

Different Christian 'world views'



1. Western versus traditional Indian Christianity – the Bangalore liberal

Christ is with you

So one principle I follow in my life is that Christ is with you wherever you go. So if you can do it when he is there with you then go ahead and do it.

Being professional

salaries were very low and I felt that it wasn't right because .. when you do things out of, what you say, service, it's different ..people shouldn't be taken advantage of.



2. Compassion and obedience – the Bangalore saint

- *The Christian foundation is important because the diocese wanted to have outreach programmes, so starting a special school was part of their outreach programme.*
- *You should expect not to receive anything from other people*



DEFN of: MENTAL RETARDATION

"Mental Retardation refers To Significantly Subaverage general intellectual functioning existing Concurrently With Deficits in Adaptive Behaviour and Manifested During The Develop-Mental Period"

GROSSMAN

CAUSES of MENTAL RETARDATION

PRENATAL

1. Maternal infection.
2. Hormonal imbalance
3. Maternal illness
4. Maternal drug injection.
5. Radiation
6. Maternal anoxia
7. Maternal Malnutrition
8. R h. Incompatibility
9. Intoxication

NATAL

- . Premature babies are More frequently.
- . Victims of damage.
- . Prolonged pregnancy
- . Long & difficult birth
- . Pelvis malformation
- . Twisting of the umbilical cord.
- . Use of forceps.
- . Abnormalities in presentation.
- . Haemorrhages With in brain
- . Anoxia (lack of Oxygen)

POST NATAL

- . Encephalitis.
- . T.B. meningitis
- . Non infectious Encephalitis.
- . Metabolic abnormality.
- . Nutritional deprivation.
- . Endocrine abnormality
- . Metal Poison
- . Associated with diseases

3. Hospitality trumps everything – the Mizoram ideal host

Sociable

- We are in and out of each other's houses.

We are so sociable (laughs) unlike non tribal we are so close .

Discipline

- Christians have to be kind, but without discipline we cannot be kind. Most [problem children] have a bad background- family broken, so many problems. There are drop outs, some bunk classes. But when we look into their personal life we find out they have bad family. If parents didn't teach good manners we see it in school it is due to bad parenting.

4.Exemplifying God's love through procreation or celibacy- The Assam priest

- Yes there are so many [SEN] children they are very slow and maximum children are only children, ...so they are not normal children ...and these children are really problematic, ..they behave abnormal and they want to have attention from everybody ..we have to handle with GREAT care... This child has so much comfort...so they don't know anything.....



5.All ways lead to God- pluralist EY principal, Assam

- If they know about the love of God, they will know about Good and Bad. Everyone has a different religion, I cannot say Hindu is bad. God is present everywhere. We all worship the same God.... We don't want to force them [to convert to Christianity]. So far parents don't have any objection [to the Christian ethos – Christian singing , prayers etc] Parents come to the Christmas celebration , the gift exchange, refreshment and all.

Faith informing practice :Communicate

Christian values – but not coerce

- ‘We plant the seed and leave it to God’ (SEN teacher B school)
- Well we are trying to focus on virtues like obedience cleanliness, discipline and every month, there are 10 virtues this month is a virtue about cleanliness how to keep the classroom clean last month it was discipline. (Chennai Christian college principal)
- ‘God is present everywhere. We all worship the same God. We don’t want to force them. If parents don’t have any objections, so far they don’t. The parents like our Christian foundation – at Christmas the parents come and exchange gifts.’ (Assam Nursery principal)

Christian values enacted in practice

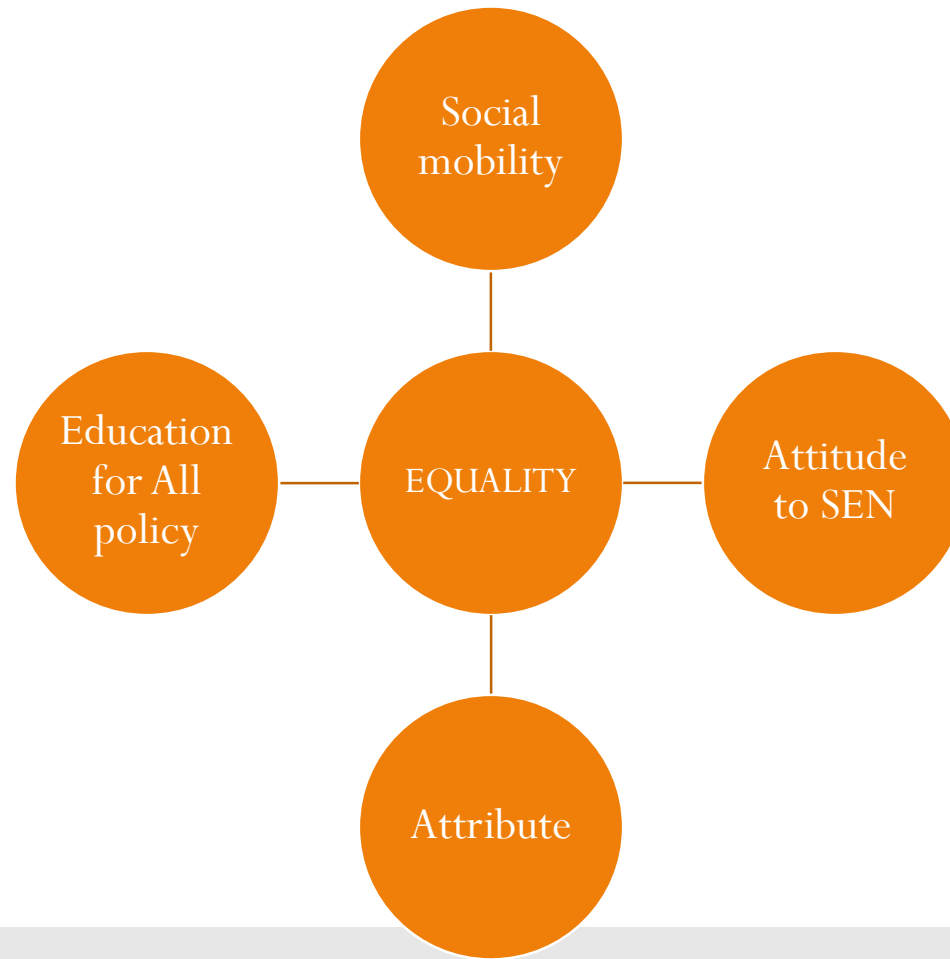
- Most teachers said they teach values to Christian and non Christian children but emphasised they not allowed to convert eg Moral science class (ethics/ citizenship)
- All children attend assemblies where Christian values are espoused

‘I give scripture union classes for children, 70% attend – I don’t know how far this impacts on their life’ (Chennai teacher)

Discipline in a Christian school

- S: So in a Hindu school or in a government school is there not the same discipline?
- T: No no no
- S: So that is the characteristic of a Christian school, better discipline, Why do you think that is ?
- T: It is the administration , how the things should be done in a proper wayWe have certain rules and if we do not follow those rulesDiscipline is better in a Christian school. Other private schools are good . It is the government schools that are lacking in discipline
- S: Why are they lacking in discipline
- T: Because of the administration . It depends on the principal... Sometimes if the students are poor they are not disciplined well (Jorhat teacher)

Equality – a Christian concept?



Teaching about Equality

With younger children we teach about equality - Some of us are talking about how we should be together , there should be no caste differences . It is very much predominant in India – it is telling the younger generation there should be more equality. Education for all is an idea from a Scottish Missionary

(Chennai teacher)

Uniform in Assam

- S: is it usual for teachers to wear a uniform?
- T: Teachers have uniforms in other schools , but it is not common.
- T: We decided
- S: You decided to have a uniform ? Why?
- T: Uniformity
- S: Why is uniformity good?
- T: For the children
- S: So the children know that you are the teacher ?
- T : To show we are all equal
- S: Why would you not be equal is it the religion?
- T: It is our way, our style



Discipline in government and Christian schools

‘they [parents] want the children to go to a Christian school irrespective of what caste or religion they come from, Indian people often send their children to a Christian institution because they like value based education provided in a Christian institution and also discipline is good’. (Principal A school SEN)

Government school headteacher disagreed that discipline was problematic



Conclusions

- Head teachers' Christian **values** underpin decision making and day to day practices are **varied**
- Findings reveal **depth and richness** of the varied expressions of the impact of Christian **faith on practice within the post-colonial context**
- The **range of values in one faith**, across a **range of states**, in India = **variation of values and practice**
- Implications of this case study – can teachers in UK learn from this case study in a foreign country: Dealing with Governmental directives counter to values and beliefs?

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